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Viewing cable 09SANAA2155, SA'ADA CEASEFIRE TALKS SLOW BUT NOT STALLED

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09SANAA2155**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09SANAA2155	2009-12-02 12:24	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy Sanaa

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9133>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9134>
<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9133>
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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHYN #2155/01 3361224
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 021224Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANAA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3309

INFO RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0428
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 1709
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH 0446
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SANAA 002155

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP AMACDONALD AND INR/NESA JYAPHE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: SA'ADA CEASEFIRE TALKS SLOW BUT NOT STALLED

REF: SANAA 2117

Classified By: CDA Angie Bryan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Sa'ada ceasefire discussions continue to move forward slowly, even during the week-long Eid holiday, and Houthi mediator Hassan Zaid is cautiously optimistic about the possibility that a ceasefire will be reached. While Zaid thinks President Saleh is not serious about a ceasefire and is conducting these discussions to buy time, he believes that efforts by rival power brokers to persuade the Saudi government to withdraw support for Saleh's war could create conditions for a ceasefire. While Post does not assess that a ceasefire is imminent, given Saleh's determination to solve the conflict militarily, it is nevertheless promising that ceasefire discussions and decisions about the mediation commission's membership are ongoing. END SUMMARY.

MEDIATION COMMISSION BEING FORMED

¶2. (S/NF) Hassan Zaid, chairman of the opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) and the Houthis' intermediary with President Saleh, told PolOff on December 2 that ceasefire discussions continue moving forward slowly, and progress has been made in terms of the composition of the proposed mediation commission that will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the government's five points and the Houthis' demands (reftel). As reported in reftel, the commission will consist of military representatives MG Ali Muhsin, Northwest Regional Commander, Ali al-Jayfi, head of the Giants Brigade, and Faisal Rajab, a southern military commander, and Houthi representatives Abdulkarim Amir Adim al-Houthi, Saleh Ahmed Habra, and Saleh al-Samaad. President Saleh called Zaid in late November, during the Eid holiday, to propose that the commission also consist of three independent members: Hassan Zaid himself, Yassin Saeed Noman, Secretary General of the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), and Abdul-Wahab al-Anisi, the Secretary of the Islah Party. The three accepted the invitation. The mediation commission has not yet met, and the Houthis insist that it not meet until a ceasefire is first declared, according to Zaid.

¶3. (S/NF) Zaid told PolOff that he plans to propose that presidential adviser Abdul Karim al-Iryani be on the commission as well. Zaid said that he would accept outside observers to participate in the mediation commission as well, as it provides greater guarantees of security and effective implementation. He said any foreign country or multilateral organization would be welcomed -) including the United States. "The more you have neutral groups involved, the more you have serious guarantees," he said. Zaid said he has heard reports that the Qatari Foreign Minister has asked Abdul Karim al-Iryani to revive their involvement in a mediation effort. (Comment: Qatar was involved in the mediation after the fifth war, and the ROYG is reportedly not inclined to accept them in a mediation role this time around. End Comment.)

AWAITING SAUDI RESPONSE

¶4. (S/NF) Tribal leader Rabaea Amin al-Okaimi, MP and tribal leader Hussein al-Ahmar, and southern politician Abdul-Rahman al-Jeffri -- all of whom have traveled to Saudi Arabia to convey messages to the SAG from the Houthis -- are reportedly awaiting responses, according to Zaid. Jaifi and Okaimi told Zaid that they believe perhaps the floods in Jeddah have delayed a decision by the Saudis, as they are distracted with the natural disaster. According to Zaid, the Houthis are ready to withdraw from their positions in Jebel Dukhan and Duwait if the Saudis cease their attacks, and they want Yemeni tribal sheikhs living in the area to guarantee the ceasefire. Zaid reports that the SAG has asked the Houthis to release nine Saudi soldiers they are holding prisoner, and may agree to a ceasefire in return. However, Zaid speculates that in order to save face, the Saudis will not publicly announce a ceasefire, but instead announce that they have achieved their objectives.

INTERNAL PROXY WAR?

¶5. (S/NF) Zaid believes that the war in Sa'ada is actually an internal proxy war between President Saleh and power brokers -- particularly Ali Muhsin -- who will challenge the presidential bid of Saleh's son, Ahmed Ali. (Comment: This view is widely shared by powerful businessmen, tribal leaders, and local political analysts. End Comment.) He claims that Ali Muhsin and the Ahmar family have succeeded in convincing King Abdullah that Saleh launched the war in Sa'ada not to defeat the Houthis, but to weaken potential rivals when his son Ahmed Ali seeks to replace his father as president. According to Zaid, Muhsin and the Ahmars told King Abdullah that Saleh is actually providing weapons to the Houthis so that his son's rival, Ali Muhsin, will have to spend vast amounts of his own human, financial, and military resources to defeat them. (Note: Zaid said that it is not necessarily true that Saleh is providing weapons to the Houthis -- in fact Ali Muhsin is also accused of doing so --) but Muhsin and the Ahmars have allegedly convinced King Abdullah that it is true. End Note.) Zaid believes that Saudi attention will shift to President Saleh's prosecution of the war; if they are convinced that he is arming the Houthis, the Saudis may decide to withdraw their support for him.

IMPEDIMENTS TO A CEASEFIRE

¶6. (S/NF) "It will be very difficult to stop the war now," Zaid said, lamenting that the parties did not take advantage of the face-saving opportunity offered by the Eid holiday to cease hostilities. (Comment: Rushing to reach a ceasefire during Eid might have produced one with less chance of holding, however. End Comment.) Zaid believes that there are currently two major obstacles to a ceasefire: a divided Saudi leadership and the rivalry between Ahmed Ali and Ali Muhsin. President Saleh will never feel confident about his son's chances of succeeding him as long as Ali Muhsin is strong, since Muhsin would support a rival presidential candidate. Saleh "has to weaken him, drain him of resources," as he is attempting to do through this costly war. As long as Saleh is able to supplement his military campaign with SAG assets -- and benefitting financially from SAG payments as well, as many observers speculate -- while weakening rivals, it is in his interest to continue the war.

COMMENT

¶7. (S/NF) While Post does not assess that a ceasefire is imminent, given Saleh's determination to solve the conflict militarily, it is nevertheless promising that ceasefire discussions and decisions about the mediation commission's membership continued during the Eid holiday. We continue to encourage all parties to pursue these ceasefire discussions more seriously, while maintaining our public commitment to

the need for a political solution to the conflict.
BRYAN